

## In the News

# Yolo Judges Recognize Court Employees

In Yolo County, recognition of the dedication of court and county employees extends beyond the courthouse walls.

An article in the November 15, 2000, *West Sacramento Press* titled "Yolo County Court Employees Are Honored at Luncheon" featured a list of the honorees of the court's second annual Employee Recognition Program. The event, which was hosted by the court's judges, acknowledged both the performance of court staff and the support the court receives from county agencies. Awards were presented to employees involved in court activities that benefited the public, including the Drug Court Task Force, the Juvenile Violence Court Task Force, the Family Protection and Legal Assistance Clinic, Yolo County's historic courthouse, and the new traffic court facility.

According to the *Press* story, the luncheon was held at the

County Administration Building and was attended by 170 court and county employees. Many of them appeared in a photo that accompanied the article (right).

Other court-related programs in the news in recent months:

**"West Covina Court Adopts Streamlined Juror System,"** *San Gabriel Valley Daily Tribune*, November 29, 2000

The story announced the start of the one-day/one-trial juror system at the Superior Court of Los Angeles County's West Covina courthouse and described how it would benefit those called to jury service.

**"Groundbreaking Kiosks Provide a Window Into Judicial System,"** *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 2000

The article described the Superior Court of Orange County's new self-help kiosks at



Court employees gathered for a picture on the front steps of the courthouse following the Superior Court of Yolo County's luncheon and awards presentation. Photo: Courtesy of the Superior Court of Yolo County

its family law information center and the services the center offers to court users.

**"Free Legal Help Comes to Town,"** *News-Ledger* (West Sacramento), November 22, 2000

The story described the establishment of a family law facilitator in the Superior Court of Yolo County's West Sacramento courthouse and included a list of the services provided.

**"Turning Their Lives Around: First Graduates of Unique Drug Counseling Program Celebrate Their Success,"** *Tribune* (Pacifica), October 25, 2000

The article mentioned the involvement of the Superior Court of San Mateo County in the Bridges Day Treatment Program, which assists nonviolent drug- and alcohol-dependent defendants. ■

## Unification

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### STUDY CONFIRMS BENEFITS OF UNIFICATION

In addition to testimonials, a recent report verifies that, in most instances, unification is working as intended. *Analysis of Trial Court Unification in California* is the result of a statewide study conducted by the American Institutes of Research (AIR), a national not-for-profit social science research organization.

## Study's Recommendations

*Analysis of Trial Court Unification in California* makes recommendations about issues that require statewide leadership in order for trial courts to function efficiently and effectively in the long term. The recommendations are consistent with the objectives outlined in the recently approved Judicial Council Operational Plan (fiscal years 2000-2001 through 2002-2003).

Some of the recommendations are to:

- Identify and address judicial and administrative staffing needs and courts' increased need for general administrative support services;
- Resolve pending policy issues related to the state funding transition;
- Improve access to education and training for judicial officers and court staffs;
- Address courts' need for improvements in facilities and technology; and
- Facilitate trial courts' access to statewide management information.

The study focused on 53 trial courts that were unified as of April 1999, when the study was commissioned by the AOC. The analysis is qualitative and focuses on the initial changes and successes achieved through unification as well as the challenges that still face the trial courts.

AIR's analysis involved case studies of four counties—Fresno, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, and San Mateo—along with substantial consultation with and input from a broad cross-section of unified trial courts across the state. The case studies included review of background data, site visits, and interviews with presiding judges, court executive officers, judicial officers, court staff, local district attorneys, public defenders, and other justice system representatives. The findings were reviewed and discussed with many unified trial courts during workshops at the 2000 California Judicial Administration Conference and in a project meeting held in April 2000. In addition, an electronic forum on Serranus, the internal judicial branch Web site, was used to solicit input from trial courts about the preliminary study findings.

The report notes that the state's trial courts have undergone significant changes since 1990. Given the interrelationships among unification, court coordination, state funding of

trial courts, and other major statewide reforms, the research focused on identifying ways in which unification had played a unique or facilitating role in court improvements.

"Our unified court now has a single mission, so we can pool all of our resources to concentrate on community-focused services," says Wayne Hall, Executive Officer of the Superior Court of San Luis Obispo County. "We also have flexibility in applying judicial resources. Judges can be moved to where they are most needed, which ultimately benefits the public."

"One of the advantages of unification is that it has enabled us to think proactively rather than reactively," says Tamara Beard, Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Fresno County. "It has allowed us to create new positions and functions with existing court staff."

### SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS

Study participants overwhelmingly agreed that unification has been a positive development for the California court system—one that has benefited not only the judiciary and court staff but the communities served by the courts. Many unification-related changes have resulted in courts' becoming more user-friendly and have enabled courts to improve the quality and/or quantity of services they provide.

Following are some of the

specific impacts of unification that were identified in the study.

- Many courts have improved their services to the public through reorganization and the reallocation of judicial and staff resources.
- Some courts have expanded programs, such as drug courts, domestic violence courts, and services to juveniles. Other changes include expanded hours of service and new filing and payment procedures.
- Court operations are generally becoming more efficient as courts reorganize their administrative operations along functional, rather than jurisdictional, lines. The duplication that existed in the two-tier court system is being eliminated and flexibility is increasing, allowing courts to reallocate resources to be more responsive to needs in the county.
- Improved court calendars and case management practices have reduced backlogs and case disposition times in some courts.
- Courts have gained more flexibility in organizing and assigning judicial and staff resources.
- Judges are hearing a wider range of cases than before unification.
- Local rules, policies, and procedures are being standardized to support the countywide structure of court operations.

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# Locate Court Interpreters Online

To increase the trial courts' access to qualified interpreter services, the Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC) Court Interpreters Program has added to its Web site a roster of court interpreters. The list, located at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters/), includes information for certified and registered interpreters throughout the state.

Visitors to the site can search for interpreters by name, county, or language. The search results include each interpreter's name, contact information, and interpreter certification number; languages spoken; and the counties in which the interpreter is available.

"The electronic roster provides immediate, up-to-date information so trial courts can locate qualified court interpreters," says José Guillén, Director of the AOC's Trial Court Programs Division. "The posting of this information will help further the Judicial Council's goal of ensuring equal access to the judicial system."

## FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO WEB SITE

The Court Interpreters Program has reorganized its Web site to not only provide access to the interpreter roster but enable visitors to more easily navigate the entire site. The restructured site reflects the three key groups served by the program. The site:

- ▲ Provides material for individuals interested in becoming court interpreters, including information on training programs and professional associations, tips on the special skills required of interpreters, and a list of frequently asked questions;

- ▲ Offers existing interpreters information on continuing education requirements and training; and

- ▲ Provides courts with the relevant law when they appoint an interpreter.

- For more information, visit the Court Interpreters Web site at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters/), or contact Beth Gatchalian-Litwin, 415-865-7631, e-mail: [beth.gatchalian@jud.ca.gov](mailto:beth.gatchalian@jud.ca.gov). ■

## JBSIS

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since 1977-1978 and, for several courts, information reported electronically by JBSIS standards, beginning in July 1999. In addition to the case-related reports, the JBSIS Web site contains information on the history of JBSIS, upcoming training sessions, and the JBSIS implementation process for the courts.

"JBSIS will produce other benefits aside from generating caseload and workload statistics," states Ms. Yerian. "JBSIS will also improve accuracy in

statistical reporting and uniformity in procedures and automated systems."

The JBSIS Web site can be reached through Serranus at <http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov>. Serranus is not available to the general public. It requires a log-in ID and password for which judicial branch employees can register through the AOC's Information Services Division. The link to the JBSIS Web site is located on the Programs page of the Serranus Web site.

- For more information, contact Christine Drake, 415-865-7419, e-mail: [christine.drake@jud.ca.gov](mailto:christine.drake@jud.ca.gov). ■

## Unification

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*Analysis of Trial Court Unification in California* characterizes unification as a work in progress rather than an isolated event. The report notes that trial court systems across the state continue to face many challenges in their efforts to reshape their organizations. For example, the study found that limitations in court technology and facilities are increasingly apparent as the larger and more complex trial court organizations strive to deliver services to the public countywide.

"Unification has dramatically simplified governance of our courts, allowing us to make improvements in operations that would not otherwise have been possible," says Stephen Thunberg, Executive Officer of the Superior

Court of San Diego County. "However, resolving the technology differences that exist among the courts has proven difficult."

"Our most difficult challenges have been experienced by courtroom staff," adds Ms. Beard. "Since the different kinds of cases judges are hearing have increased, courtroom personnel have needed to learn different areas of the law."

*Analysis of Trial Court Unification in California* is being distributed to the leaders of the judicial, executive, and legislative branches and to many external justice system-related organizations. It is available on the California Courts Web site at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference) and on the Serranus Web site at <http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov>.

- For more information, contact Jacquelyn Harbert, 415-865-7708, e-mail: [jacquelyn.harbert@jud.ca.gov](mailto:jacquelyn.harbert@jud.ca.gov). ■

# CountyProfile

## Sutter



Sutter County's courthouse in Yuba City was dedicated in 1900.

**Geographic area:** 607 square miles, approximately 40 miles north of Sacramento

**Population:** 77,900, making it the 38th largest county in the state. By 2020 the population is expected to grow by 49 percent to 116,408.

### Demographics:

Age: 0-19 ≈ 31%; 20-39 ≈ 27%; 40-59 ≈ 24%; 60-79 ≈ 14%; 80+ ≈ 4%

Race/Ethnicity: White ≈ 67%; Hispanic ≈ 19%; Asian or Pacific Islander ≈ 11%; Black ≈ 2%; American Indian ≈ 1%

**Number of court locations:** 1

**Number of authorized judges:** 5

**Number of staff:** 42

**Caseload:** Filings for 1999-2000 totaled 22,758

**Annual operating budget:** \$3,220,920 as of January 2000

**Presiding judge:** Robert H. Damron

**Executive officer:** Len LeTellier

**Of note:** Sutter County is home to the Sutter Buttes, which rise to about 2,100 feet above sea level. Geologists have labeled them the world's smallest mountain range.

**Sources:** Superior Court of Sutter County; U.S. Census Bureau; California State Department of Finance



## Say It With a Postcard

California courts now have commemorative postcards to use as expressions of thanks for court volunteers, jurors, visitors, and other friends of the court.

In honor of the 150th anniversary of the state's court system in 2000, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) sent each court executive officer a set of postcards featuring a photograph of a historic courthouse in his or her own county. Local courts can use the postcards in a variety of communications programs. Courts desiring additional postcards can find the graphics files for the cards on the Serranus Web site, [serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov](http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov), along with instructions for downloading and printing the cards locally.

The historic courthouse postcards are based on the photographs exhibited in the Judicial Council Conference Center in San Francisco. The exhibition, curated by Barbara George, includes a photograph of a historic courthouse from each of the state's 58 counties.



Court staff and the public can see all the courthouse photographs on the California Courts Web site at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/trial/historic/](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/trial/historic/). Questions about uses for the postcards can be addressed to Ellen McCarthy in the AOC's Office of Communications, 415-865-7447.





Judge Judith  
McConnell



Judge Veronica  
McBeth



Christine Patton



Stephen V. Love



Andrew Guilford

# Distinguished Service Awards Announced

At its December 15 meeting, the Judicial Council announced the recipients of the 2000 Distinguished Service Awards, its highest honor for those who demonstrate extraordinary leadership and make significant contributions to the administration of justice in California. Chief Justice Ronald M. George will present the awards (now in their eighth year) during the 2001 California Judicial Administration Conference, which takes place January 31 through February 2 in San Diego.

The recipients of the 2000 Distinguished Service Awards follow.

## JURIST OF THE YEAR AWARD

The recipients of the Jurist of the Year Award are **Judge Judith McConnell**, Superior Court of San Diego County, and **Judge Veronica McBeth**, Superior Court of Los Angeles County.

Judge McConnell and Judge McBeth are being recognized, in part, for their work as co-chairs of the Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee. The committee is in charge of implementing California's Court and Community Collaboration Project, which seeks to improve the quality of justice in trial courts by forging a positive relationship between courts and the communities they serve.

The Court and Community Collaboration Project has two parts: the establishment of community-focused planning in the trial courts and the design and

implementation of community outreach programs at the local level. Judge McConnell and Judge McBeth assumed leadership roles in the project and continue to lead statewide efforts toward the institutionalization of community-focused court planning.

In October the co-chairs were active in planning and staging the Trial Court Planning Workshop 2000, which was attended by staff members from 49 of California's 58 county courts. The workshop provided attendees with an update on topics relevant to court planning and outreach as well as an opportunity to share best practices. The success of the workshop and the Court and Community Collaboration Project is substantiated by the fact that in fiscal year 1999-2000, the inaugural year of community-focused planning, 94 percent of courts submitted strategic plans to the Judicial Council—plans developed by local teams with significant community input.

Judge McConnell, who began her career on the bench in 1978, has volunteered for many organizations and committees to improve judicial administration. She has served as a member of the Judicial Council, its Advisory Committee on Gender Bias in the Courts and Task Force on Jury System Improvements, the California State Senate Task Force on Family Equity, and an advisory board for the Center for Public Policy Studies that focused on indigent representa-

tion in civil cases. In addition, she is a current member of the Qualifying Ethics Planning Committee, which is implementing the first official ethics training for judicial officers as part of the Qualifying Ethics Program.

Judge McBeth is involved with several judicial and community organizations. She led the then-Los Angeles Municipal Court and its Public Committee in the First Impressions Project, a comprehensive outreach program aimed at educating students about the law and the court system. In addition, she serves as moderator of the National Consortium of Task Forces and Commissions on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Courts.

A jurist in Los Angeles County since 1981, Judge McBeth has earned recognition and numerous awards for her work on the bench and in her community. In the last few years alone, she has received the Chief Justice William Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence (1998), the National Center for State Courts' Community Service Award (1998), the Municipal Court Criminal Judge of the Year Award (1996), and the National Center for State Courts' Distinguished Service Award (1996).

Both Judge McConnell and Judge McBeth are past recipients of the Benjamin Aranda III Access to Justice Award, which is presented annually to a trial judge or appellate justice whose activities demonstrate a long-term commitment to improving access to the courts for low- and moderate-income Californians.

## JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION AWARD

**Christine Patton**, Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Santa Cruz County, and **Stephen V. Love**, formerly Executive Officer of the Superior Court of Santa Clara County, were selected for their contributions to statewide court administration as well as to their respective courts.

Ms. Patton, who has served as executive officer of the Santa Cruz County court since 1988, guided the court system through its transition from municipal and superior courts to consolidated/coordinated courts and eventually to a unified court. During that time, she worked to ensure a smooth transition for all judges and court staff.

Ms. Patton has contributed to statewide judicial administration by serving on many committees and task forces. She is a current member of the Task Force on Trial Court Employees and the Trial Court Budget Commission, and is the current chair of the Court Executives Advisory Committee's Subcommittee on Reporting of Court Proceedings. In addition, she is a past member of the Court Administrators Standing Advisory Committee, the Trial Court Coordination Advisory Committee, the Trial Court Performance Standards Com-

mittee, and the Senate Constitutional Amendment No. 4 Working Group.

Mr. Love, who was appointed executive officer of the Superior Court of Santa Clara County in 1992, enhanced the physical accessibility of the courts by working closely with the county to renovate and secure additional facility space. Under his leadership, the Superior Court of Santa Clara County was able to expand its existing space to house child support enforcement commissioners, their staffs, ancillary agencies, a self-help center, and a children's waiting room. He was instrumental in laying the groundwork for a new 22-courtroom facility to replace six leased facilities. In addition, he helped to establish a new court security structure to better protect the public and court employees.

Mr. Love has served on the Judicial Council as an advisory member and on many of its committees that assist in the administration of the courts statewide. Most recently he served as chair of the Court Executives Advisory Committee.

## BERNARD E. WITKIN AWARD

Attorney **Andrew Guilford** is the recipient of the Bernard E. Witkin Award, which is named for the renowned legal scholar and recognizes individuals who are not current members of the judiciary but who champion court issues. In addition to Mr. Guilford's representation of clients, he has sought to increase access to justice for all Californians, regardless of income.

As a member of the State Bar Board of Governors and later as State Bar president (1999-2000), Mr. Guilford strongly supported the activities of the California Commission on Access to Justice. He advocated the development of the \$10 million Equal Access Fund, which has enabled new court-based self-help centers to be opened around the state. He has also helped to sustain other activities of the commission, including its development of training for judges and access protocols and the dissemination of information to the state's pro per litigants. One of his last acts as president of the State Bar was to send a letter to all California law firms asking for a renewed commitment to pro bono work.

Mr. Guilford, who has been a practicing attorney in California for 25 years, is a senior partner at Sheppard, Mullin, Richter and Hampton. He has been active in the Orange County Bar Association, chairing its Delay Reduction Committee and serving on its Federal Courts Committee, Pro Bono Committee, and Judiciary Committee. He has also served on the boards of directors of the Public Law Center and the Constitutional Rights Foundation. ■

## Judge Charles W. Campbell, Jr., Selected for Aranda Access to Justice Award

Superior Court of Ventura County Judge Charles W. Campbell, Jr., is the 2000 recipient of the Benjamin Aranda III Access to Justice Award. He will receive the award during the California Judicial Administration Conference, being held January 31 through February 2 in San Diego.

Sponsored by the Judicial Council, the State Bar, and the California Judges Association, the award is presented annually to a trial judge or appellate justice whose activities demonstrate a long-term commitment to improving access to the courts for low- and moderate-income Californians.

Judge Campbell, who served as presiding judge of the Superior Court of Ventura County from 1998 to 2000, has spent much of his career working to increase access to the justice system. He spearheaded the development of California's first court-run self-help program for pro per litigants in areas other than family law. Augmenting its existing Family Law Clinic, the Ventura County court opened its Self-Help Legal Access (SHLA) Center to assist self-represented litigants with all types of civil matters and traffic infractions. Judge Campbell also supported the acquisition of the court's Mobile Self-Help Center, which takes SHLA Center services to geographically remote areas of the county. Together, the court's Family Law Clinic and SHLA Center (including the mobile center) assisted more than 21,000 people in 1999.

Further demonstrating his commitment to increasing access to justice for underrepresented litigants, Judge Campbell, as presiding judge, adopted a court policy that grants priority on the court's daily hearing calendar to attorneys appearing on behalf of pro bono clients through the Ventura County Bar Association's Volunteer Legal Services Program or other recognized pro bono services.

To enhance public participation in the justice system, Judge Campbell instituted a series of community forums throughout Ventura County at which the public could direct questions to those involved in the court system. In spring 2000 he conducted several impromptu town hall-style meetings with jurors and potential jurors, soliciting comments and suggestions on how to improve jury service. In addition, during Law Day he had an online chat with students from Balboa Middle School to answer their questions about the justice system.

Judge Campbell is currently forming a local fairness committee that will comprise Ventura County Bar Association members and court representatives. The committee will receive and respond to the grievances of those who feel they have been the objects of bias from an officer of the court.



Judge Charles W.  
Campbell, Jr.